



For Discussion

**Title: Cairngorms 2030 programme update, quarter four 2024
(October – December)**

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Purpose

1. This paper presents the status of programme and risk management, based on information in project reports for the period from October to December 2024, and updated where appropriate to reflect current position as at the time of writing, and the planned work to end March 2025.

Recommendations

2. The Performance Committee is asked to:
 - a) Note progress to date and future plans for Cairngorms 2030 delivery
 - b) Note specific points of Cairngorms 2030 delivery risk
 - c) Highlight any issues arising that members may feel need specific consideration by staff from a strategic and board perspective.







Strategic context

3. Cairngorms 2030 (C2030) will inspire people and communities in the National Park to act and tackle the nature and climate crisis. Bringing together 20 long-term projects on transforming landscapes, empowering communities, rethinking how we travel and championing wellbeing.
4. The Park Authority was awarded £12.5 million by The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to develop and deliver C2030 and become the UK's first net zero national park. The five-year delivery phase commenced in January 2024.



Strategic risk management

5. Performance dashboard: Programme level (see Annex 1 for projects)

| Performance Measure | Red Amber Green (RAG) status | | Issue/mitigation |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| Programme risk profile | Amber |  | Risk profile remains at amber following notification from Sustrans Scotland that design stage funding was not available in 2024/2025. However, positive news has been received from Transport Scotland confirming the Park Authority will not have to reapply for Active Communities design funding. Formal award letter due March/April 2025 which will include inflationary cost increase. |
| Future funding profile | Amber |  | Risk profile remains static for another quarter, but the trend is towards a reduced funding risk given the recent positive news from Transport Scotland. |
| Finance: impact on Park Authority budget management | Green |  | No significant impact current or projected identified. The potential financial implications for C2030 programme delivery are a key element of 2025/26 budget scenario plans as board and management consider deployment of financial allocations for the next financial year. Overall budget management impacts remain within the total agreed £2.75 million contribution in approved bid. |
| Procurement | Green |  | Procurement standards and project initiation approvals are being revised to improve compliance and decision making. |
| Staffing | Green |  | Higher than usual staff moves over the period, but no immediate delivery risk or impacts identified. |
| Delivery of Transport Scotland funded projects | Amber |  | Transport Scotland active travel match funding for the programme is not secured at the values or within the timelines required to achieve project objectives. Active Communities project risk profile remains at amber until March 2025 where it is expected to return to RAG green status. |



Stakeholder engagement

6. Communications:
 - a) Published an end of year highlight article in our winter edition of Cairn magazine, distributed to 12,000 households in the National Park.
 - b) Worked on increasing social media coverage of C2030 with new strategies, seeing an improvement of 319% engagements with content on last quarter.
 - c) Continued with micro-updates on social media covering various projects.
 - d) Commissioned local film company Wunnar films to create two assets telling the story of the deer larders and interviewing farmers involved in the Future farming project.
 - e) Published an interview with the Strathspey Pedal Initiative (SPIN) project, recipients of a C2030 tender in Cairn magazine.
 - f) Published an online blog interview with Moray Climate Action Network who we are working with as part of Climate Resilient Communities.
 - g) Coordinated and organised a press interview with participants who have benefited greatly from the Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre by taking part in the 'wintering well' programme. This had led to an increase in interest and enquiries at the centre.
 - h) Collaborated on a press release with Bothy project announcing the successful artists in residence as part of the Community arts and culture project.
 - i) Article published in Dementia Arts magazine highlighting the Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre.

7. Volunteer activity
 - a) Supporting community organisations to recruit, train and manage their own volunteers.
 - b) The Park Authority volunteer Ranger team continue to support the activity of C2030 partners predominantly through the Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre.
 - c) Volunteers giving time to new activities specifically initiated through C2030 funding, for example over 100 hours of volunteer time given through the Cycle Friendly Cairngorms 'SPIN' project by 16 volunteers
 - d) Working with the Changing Travel Behaviours project to:



- i. Develop plans for a volunteer 'bike bus' leader programme in a range of schools across Badenoch and Strathspey and
- ii. Develop volunteer-led social rides supporting people to build confidence and cycle more often.
- e) Working with the Cycle Friendly Cairngorms project to identify which partner community organisations hosting bike hubs may involve volunteers and where extra support might be necessary to ensure sustainable involvement.
- f) Scoping with the Woodland Expansion project three potential scenarios for volunteer-involvement across Aspen monitoring; montane willow planting; and tree nursery volunteering.
- g) Exploring with the Nature Recovery project opportunities for volunteer involvement in biological recording, to provide evidence of the impact of C2030 activity.
- h) Working with the Peatland team to scope options to test an innovative model of volunteer involvement for peatland restoration in the Cairngorms in partnership with Butterfly Conservation Scotland.

Supporting information; theme lead highlights

- 8. Transforming landscapes
 - a) During 2024 we delivered 1,350ha of new native woodland planted at Atholl.
 - b) More than 1,500ha of peatland underwent restoration in 2024.
 - c) Two new community deer larders have been delivered and have started to distribute venison to communities.
 - d) £1.5 million plus Nature recovery grant scheme started seeking expressions of interest from Deer Management Group (DMG) partners engaged in the development phase to restore nature and having community benefits.
 - e) Six farms participating in regenerative farming project – looking to reduce chemical inputs, improve habitats for wildlife and reduce their carbon footprints.
 - f) River restoration projects on Dee and Spey going through planning and/or final design stage.
 - g) Community Benefits from Nature officer recruited by Scottish Land Commission
 - h) 150 people took part in the 'Best views of the Cairngorms survey'.
 - i) Climate Resilient Catchments – Dalgety floodplain project has been cancelled due to the discovery of an intermediate pressure gas pipeline crossing the



floodplain at a shallow depth (pipeline was exposed during recent floods), making this project unviable. Whilst the pipeline was noted on development phase utility surveys, the risk wasn't escalated for further investigation.

j) Deer Larder project launch confirmed for 21 February 2025.

9. Empowerment

- a) Over 10,000 people will have seen C2030 staff at events across the Park in 2024.
- b) At least 1,200 people engaged with personally at events.
- c) 835 in-depth, conversations with local community members (just counting attendance, as individual conversations with project leads would be multiplied many times - e.g. 11 projects represented at the Kingussie roadshow event and 100 attendees counted).
- d) Significant progress with the co-design method for the Creatives Arts and Culture project short-term working group, which will be presented for acceptance to the creative community in quarter one 2025.
- e) Participatory democracy consultancy tender issued.
- f) The Park Authority will launch its refreshed community grants scheme on 10 February 2025. The simplified expression of interest process will cover all Park Authority and Cairngorms 2030 available grants.

10. Transport

- a) New feedback has been received on Sustrans Places for Everyone applications 2024/25.
- b) The following Stages three to four (Detailed Design) projects, which have previously been submitted to Places for Everyone, will be passed to Transport Scotland Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) Tier two directly, with no requirement for a new application. Funding for these projects is still subject to finalisation of the Scottish Budget, and the availability of funds to Transport Scotland.



- i. CNP-PFE-4369 - ATI - Boat of Garten
 - ii. CNP-PFE-4397 - ATI - Aviemore Arterial Routes North
 - iii. CNP-PFE-4383 - ATI - Carrbridge
 - iv. CNP-PFE-4384 - ATI - Newtonmore
 - v. CNP-PFE-4387 - ATI - Nethy Bridge
- c) Stages three to four unsuccessful: The Stages three to four (Detailed Design) projects for Dulnain would not have been successful through Places for Everyone. Feedback does not recommend applying to ATIF for funding.
- d) The Park Authority will progress the active travel design procurement of Aviemore, Boat of Garten, Newtonmore and Nethy Bridge.
- e) Due to recent tender submission costs being more than project budget (see procurement update) Aviemore and Boat of Garten contracts will be offered together as a package and as separate contracts.
- f) The Park Authority will delay active travel design procurement in Carrbridge to allow additional community engagement and support to be agreed before the project proceeds.
- g) Due to the lack of funding support, the Park Authority will not progress the design procurement for Dulnain. However, the existing Transport Scotland funded Dulnain to Granttown on active travel link will be progressed.

11. Health and Wellbeing

- a) 39 Green Health referrals in 2024, with 25 participants active and 13 who have completed the programme.
- b) Over 800 people attended the Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre in 2024.

Recruitment

12. The Scottish Land Commission has appointed, Annabel Davidson Knight as The Community Benefits from Nature Adviser with a start date with the Park Authority of 10 February 2025
13. Community Engagement Officer, Fi Thompson has resigned with their last day being 07 February 2025. The post will be readvertised.
14. C2030 Administrative Officer, Dot Harris, has secured a new post with the Park Authority. Marie Smith has been appointed to this role following internal recruitment.



15. Green Health Link worker, Louise Emslie is now on maternity leave and her replacement, Lucy Topalain, has been recruited.

Governance

16. NLHF Monitoring review meeting held on 28 February 2025.

Budget and cash flow

17. Dulnain to Grantown ATIF match funding (£800,000 – non NLHF funded) at risk after delay in securing planning permission. Park Authority will resubmit planning application and reapply to Transport Scotland for ATIF funding in 2025/26.
18. The Park Authority has secured £20,000 match funding from Hitrans to help deliver transport behaviour change projects.
19. We are undertaking an assessment of the workloads and capacity of green health link workers, recognising that the scale of activity may be greater than originally expected.

Procurement

20. Active Communities transport design projects: Boat of Garten invitation to tender (ITT) published with only one bid received. The bid was £160,000 over budget and could not be awarded. ITT will be reissued with other Active Communities contracts.
21. Active Communities transport design projects:
 - a) Invitation to tenders (ITT) drafted for Aviemore, Nethy Bridge and Newtonmore.
 - b) Aviemore and Boat of Garten ITT will be published early March 2025
 - c) Nethy Bridge and Newtonmore ITT published Spring 2025.
22. Cycle Friendly Cairngorms – bike framework ITT drafted
23. Cycle Leaders ITT drafted



Legal agreements

24. None

Programme delivery actions to end March 2025.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| a) Participatory democracy tender end date | 07 February 2025 |
| b) Park Authority Community EOI grants launch (inc C2030 transport grant) | 10 February 2025 |
| c) Issue Cycle Friendly Cairngorms – bike framework ITT | Mid Feb 2025 |
| d) Issue Cycle Leaders ITT | Mid Feb 2025 |
| e) Effective community engagement – gamification event | 20 February 2025 |
| f) Press launch of Deer Larders project | 21 February 2025 |
| g) NLHF Monitoring meeting | 27 Feb 2025 |
| h) Nature Recovery Fund EOI first round selection | March 2025 |
| i) Issue Active Communities design phase ITTs for Aviemore and Boat of Garten | March 2025 |
| j) Programme Board meeting | 13 March 2025 |
| k) Performance Committee meeting | 14 March 2025 |

Significant Budget Adjustments

25. Climate Resilient Catchments – due to the cancellation of the Dalgety floodplain project a budget reallocation is required. Further details on a replacement project to be agreed in quarter one 2025.

Conclusions: Performance Overview and Matters Meriting Strategic

Review

26. In conclusion, the following key operational programme risks under management are drawn to the Performance Committee's attention:
- Programme risk level remains at amber due to the delay in receiving Sustrans design funding. However, Sustrans notified the Park Authority on 17 January 2025 that it would not have to re-apply to Transport Scotland to release this funding. Design funding for all communities except Dulnain Bridge was successful. Formal notification on the exact value and timing of the funding is due from Transport Scotland in March/April 2025.



- b) Climate Resilient Catchments – Dalgety floodplain project has been cancelled due to the discovery of an intermediate pressure gas pipeline crossing the floodplain at a shallow depth (pipeline was exposed during last floods), making this project unviable. New project proposals are being discussed with partners.
- c) Staff moves have been higher than usual but do not raise immediate cause for concern.
- d) The view of programme managers is that these escalated risks can be effectively managed and there is no current need to escalate any risks to a more strategic level.

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Annex 1

Cairngorms 2030 Project Red Amber Green (RAG) status 2024

| Cairngorms 2030: RAG status | RAG status by quarter | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| | Jan-Mar 24 | Apr-June 24 | July-Sept 24 | Oct-Dec 24 |
| Woodland Expansion | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Peatland restoration | Green | Amber | Amber | Green |
| Nature recovery | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Cairngorms future farming | Amber | Green | Green | Green |
| Climate resilient catchments | Amber | Amber | Green | Amber |
| Green finance & community wealth building | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Wellbeing economy | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Public health & the outdoors | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Outdoor dementia resource centre | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Landscape & communities | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Effective community engagement | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Climate learning & education | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Climate conscious communities | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Community arts & culture | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Community managed climate grants | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Knowledge & exchange | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Cycle friendly Cairngorms | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Active communities | Green | Amber | Amber | Amber |
| Sustainable transport | Green | Amber | Green | Green |
| Changing travel behaviours | Green | Green | Green | Green |